



## **World Cruises Offer Outsized Value to Cruise Lines and Guests**

By Erica Silverstein

An increasing number of cruise lines have four- to six-month world cruises on their annual calendars.

The sailings are so popular they often sell out years in advance.

Typically beginning in winter, world cruise itineraries tend to follow the sun to warmer climates. Some circumnavigate the globe; others circle oceans, calling on multiple continents. Guests book the full voyages or choose shorter segments that focus on a specific region.

World cruises are a staple in the annual offerings of Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) cruise line members such as Azamara Cruises, Costa Cruises, Crystal Cruises, Cunard Line, Holland America Line, MSC Cruises, Oceania Cruises, Princess Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Seabourn and Silversea Cruises. MSC Group's Explora Journeys will launch its inaugural world cruise in 2029.

With varied itineraries, ship sizes, and levels of luxury, all world cruises are geared to give well-traveled guests an unforgettable tour of the globe.

### **Planning a world cruise is a team effort**

It's no easy feat to plan a 120- to 180-night itinerary that spans continents, visits new ports, includes bespoke special events and entertainment (such as destination-focused parties), excites guests with daytime activities, and needs to be fundamentally different from the previous year's world cruise. Itinerary planning for Holland America Line's popular Grand World Voyages starts some three years in advance.

Likewise, Silversea's world cruise itineraries are the result of "a collaborative and strategic planning process" that begins years in advance, says Cailyn Hennessy, Silversea's Associate Vice President Commercial and Deployment. "Our world cruises are shaped by a cross-functional team that works together to identify emerging travel trends, assess port capabilities, and curate immersive experiences that reflect the spirit of each voyage."

Product development, food and beverage, shore excursions, hotel operations, and entertainment departments – plus partners and businesses in the destinations the ship visits – all get involved in planning.

Cruise lines gain too from listening and getting feedback from guests and trade partners, says Jason Montague, Chief Luxury Officer for Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises. "They're the most critical thing that helps us get the best world cruise itineraries out there."

### **World cruises appeal to a wide range of travelers**

World cruises appeal to wealthy luxury travelers, retired brand loyalists with time to explore, and beyond. The one commonality: curiosity about the world.

Many retired teachers sail on the line's world cruises, says Nathan Hickman, Oceania Cruises' Chief Commercial Officer. They see value, he says, in a cruise that visits multiple destinations in one trip.

Families, solo travelers, and travelers working remotely are growing segments. Some people book world cruises who have never cruised before.

Travelers may initially take a world cruise to check many items off their bucket list in one fell swoop, but it's not uncommon for them to subsequently book a world cruise every year. While many world cruisers are devoted to a particular brand, some cruisers sample different brands and ships for their annual getaways.

### **Hosting a world cruise is hard work but worth it**

From the cruise line perspective, all the specialized planning and logistics involved in world cruises has a bonus benefit: piquing people's interest and steering them towards a brand.

"There's something very attractive, aspirational about a world cruise," says Hickman. "We get a lot of people who look at us because of our 180-day around-the-world cruises, but maybe they end up taking a shorter itinerary."

Another positive side effect of planning world cruises is that they allow cruise lines to assess lesser-known ports and test guest reaction, before expanding additional ship visits, notes Hennessey.

For repeat guests, world cruises can feel like a big reunion. It's common for returning passengers to greet the crew as family, and vice versa.

"Guests tend to travel again and again on the world cruise because they know each other, and they've now formed this group," says Hickman. "We create communities and people really bond." Newcomers are, of course, welcome to the party.

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